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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on describing the demographic profile of first generation Chinese Americans in metropolitan Houston, Texas, and on exploring the changing value systems and the environmental adjustment demonstrated by the selected sample. Nearly 29 percent of the 267 selected Chinese Americans responded to the two attitude inventories designed by the researcher. The collected data indicate that the mean age of the sample is 37.2 years with 11.5 years of residence in the United States. The average of their formal education is 19.5 years, and their average annual household income is $32,400. These are both far above the census figures of 1970. The first generation Chinese immigrants have complex, changing value systems, as evidenced by the data collected by the attitude invertories. They may have a liberal attitude in one area but a conservative opinion in another. Some of their values have been liberalized through acculturation. In the cognitive domain, they have adjusted to American society quite well, especially in daily living. However, due to their preference for the Chinese language, they are not socially and psychologically integrated into the mainstream. Several questions concerning the attitudes and adjustment of Chinese Americans remain unanswered. These should be addressed by further studies. (Author/GC)

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WHO ARE THE CHINESE AMERICANS?

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WHO ARE THE CHINESE AMERICANS?

Trade between China and Western countries was initiated during the reign of the Han emperor, Wu Ti (140-87 B.C.). Chinese merchants during the period traded via Sinkiang and Tibet with Central Asia and parts of Eastern Europe. From the time of these early encounters, for more than two thousand years, many Chinese have continued to leave their homeland by both land and sea in order to better their lives in foreign lands. According to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, some 21,460,000 Chinese were living in 115 different foreign localities in 1975.

In the early period of migration to overseas countries, most Chinese were laborers (collie) and intended someday to return to their place of birth after earning enough for retirement. They were called sojourners. However, as a result of changing international relations, the number of sojourners has been decreasing since World War II. On the contrary, more and more educated Chinese have permanently migrated to foreign nations for freedom, for education, and for economic gain. Very few of these latter returned to their homeland for retirement.

Based on the 1970 Census figures, there were 435,062 Chinese Americans in the United States. On Census Day of 1970 the number of Chinese Americans was found to have increased 83 percent over that of 1960, while the entire United States population increased by only 13.3 percent. Of these Chinese Americans, half were foreign-born and the other half American-born.* Ninety-six percent of all Chinese Americans resided in urban areas, mainly in California and New York. In 1969, Chinese-American

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*The percentage of foreign-born Chinese American is much higher since 1970 as indicated by P.C. Chen in the world wide issue of Feb. 18, 1978, of Central Daily Newspaper published in Tawian, the Republic of China.

families had a median income of $10,610 with 91 percent male heads of household.

In regard to educational level, 57.8 percent of them were high-school graduates, and 26 percent of those 25 years old and over had completed four or more years of college. The mean years of school completed among Chinese Americans was 12.4. Compared with other Oriental Americans, Chinese Americans have the highest educational level. This trend has been on the rise since 1970. This phenomenon is attributed to the fact that an influx of Chinese students who came to the United States for higher education decided to settle permanently. The professions and related services such as medicine, law, education and engineering have attracted nearly one fourth of Chinese Americans. Obviously, they have moved away from the kinds of jobs held by their predecessors who arrived in this country in the 19th century.

Regardless of their economic success and educational advancement, American-born Chinese (ABC) and newly settled Chinese immigrants have still encountered various social and psychological problems during the process of assimilation to the dominant society, which unfortunately has not recognized their problems because of a lack of self-awareness and the natural reserve of the Chinese. In order to unveil the mystery of this minority group as an initial step, one needs to study their value systems and their adjustment to the environment. Since American-born Chinese and first-generation Chinese Americans possess vast differences in value systems, traditional belief, educational attainment, residential preference and economic achievement, the researcher has focused only on the latter -- contemporary Chinese immigrants -- as the prime objective of her study.

METHOD

It is estimated by the Consul General of the Republic of China in Houston, that the Chinese population in the Greater Houston Area is around ten thousand.

Sample:

Two hundred sixty-seven Chinese names were randomly drawn from the listing under the letter C of the local telephone directory and from five other membership directories of local Chinese organizations. Only 28.8 percent (77) responded with complete information and returned them anonymously by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Of the respondents, 66.2 percent (51) are male and 33.8 percent (26) are female. The average of their formal education is 19.5 years. The average household income is $32,400 per year. The mean of the sample's age is 37.2 with 11.5 years of residence in the United States. Nearly 78 percent of the sample come from Taiwan, the Republic of China, while only 22.1 percent are from mainland China prior to 1950 and other foreign countries. American-born Chinese are excluded from the sample.

Instrumentation:

Two instruments (A and B) to measure the attitude and adjustment of of Chinese Americans were mailed to the sample. The two instruments were designed by the researcher. Instrument A is entitled What Do I Believe? and Instrument B is How Do I Feel about Living in the United States? The original instruments consist of 59 and 28 items respectively. Both instruments were shortened and modified by means of a pilot study by applying factoral analysis. The final instrument A (Table 1) consists of 24 items

with a reliability of .58 computed with Cronback Alpha while Instrument B (Table 2) comprises 16 items with a reliability of .75. Each item has five rating scales which indicate the degree of their feelings toward the questions asked.

There are six areas of attitude measured by Instrument A, i.e. 1) family relations; 2) interpersonal relations; 3) sex education; 4) women's status; 5) social, economic and political issues; and 6) America and American people. There are 5, 4, 2, 3, 7, and 3 items to measure these areas of attitude respectively.

Instrument B measures the sample's social isolation, English proficiency, adaptation to the American lifestyle and outlook on life. The number of items for each area is 6, 2, 5, and 3 correspondingly.

The complete instruments are listed in Table 1 and 2. The circled items are stated in a negative manner. The mean score of Instrument A is 72 points (figured by 24 items times 3) while Instrument B is 48 points.

INSTRUMENT A: WHAT DO I BELIEVE?

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please circle the proper answer which most expresses your feeling and/or your belief. SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, N= Neutral, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree. Be sure to answer each item.

ITEMS:

1. A child should not be allowed to talk back to his parents.
SD D N A SA

2. If children are told too much about sex, they are likely to go too far in experimenting with it.
SD D N A SA

3. I have a great respect for the American People. SD D N A SA

4. A child had absolute control of his income from part-time jobs.
SD D N A SA

5. It does bother me to have no intimate friends. SD D N A SA

6. Aged or retired parents should live with their married children.
SD D N A SA

7. Americans combine the best qualities of all nationalities.
SD D N A SA

8. Man has the right to speak out in any circumstance that doesn't please him.
SD D N A SA

9. Society does not have the right to take a human life no matter what the circumstances. SD D N A SA

10. Women think less clearly than men and are more emotional.
SD D N A SA

11. Spending time and energy in doing things for other people is not necessary. I believe in looking after my family and myself and let others shift for themselves. SD D N A SA

12. With regard to juvenile delinquency, we are putting too much faith in the psychological approach; what we really need are stiffer laws and more vigilant law enforcements. SD D N A SA

13. A married woman has an equal right to work outside the home as her husband.
SD D N A SA

14. Parents should take the initiative and give information about sex before the child asks about the subject. SD D N A SA

15. A murderer deserves to die. SD D N A SA

Table 1 (Cont.)

16. Divorce lowers the standard of morality. SD(5) D(11) N(7) A(7) SA(3)

17. There is no drawback of using credit cards. SD(8) D(35) N(7) A(22) SA(2)

18. Marketing one's skills is the best working attitude. SD(1) D(11) N(14) A(17) SA(6)

19. A woman who refuses to bear children fails in her duty to her husband.
SD(5) D(23) N(10) A(23) SA(5)

20. The declining moral standards in Americanwill weaken the strength of the nation. SD(0) D(6) N(2) A(39) SA(23)

21. I do not expect my children to take care of me after my retirement.
SD 1 D 6 N 10 A 47 SA 11

22. Amnesty should be granted to army deserters by the former President Ford.
SD 13 D 27 N 10 A 10 SA 2

23. Children should not be exposed to pornography. SD 0 D 3 N 2 A 34 SA 29

24. For my children, premarital sexual relation is not allowed.
SD 2 D 3 N 13 A 34 SA 22

Table 2

INSTRUMENT B: HOW DO I FEEL ABOUT LIVING IN THE U.S.A.?

INSTRUCTION:

Please circle the answer which represents nearest to your feeling. Be sure to answer each item.

ITEMS:

1. I see my neighbors.
very seldom, seldom, sometime, often, very often
2. I am happy living in the U.S.A.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
3. I have no problem communicating with people in English.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
4. I am used to the busy life style in America.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
5. I enjoy participating in various American activities.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
6. I prefer to use my native tongue for communication whenever possible.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
7. I believe my neighbors will come to help me in case of emergency.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
8. I do not mind doing the routine work (mow the lawn, vacuum the house) around the house. Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
9. I (or my spouse) take part in maintaining my (our) family car.
very seldom, seldom, sometime, often, very often.
10. I am (or will be) involved with my children's school activities.
very seldom, seldom, sometime, often, very often.
11. I enjoy camping and other American out-door sports.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
12. My children adjust very well to school.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
13. I have trouble finding the styles in clothing to which I am accustomed for myself and for members of my family.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
14. I feel I have better chance of success in U.S. than in China.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
15. I am involved in local community activities and/or civil clubs.
Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree
16. I have confidence about my future life in the U.S.A.
Strongly Disagree, Disgree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree

Limitation:

Obviously, the selected sample represents only those recently arrived Chinese Americans who are highly educated and are in a high-income bracket.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is interesting to point out the inconsistant value judgment reflected by the sample. The results strongly suggest that these Chinese Americans are in a dilemma between Eastern and Western cultures and traditions. Overall, the sample tends to be more conservative than was expected. However, their adjustment to American society has been considerably rapid as measured by Instrument B.

I. Instrument A: What Do I Believe?

The progressiveness of the sample's value system is examined in light of the following six areas:

A. Attitude toward family relations:

Parental control of children is still believed in by a majority of the sample, yet open communication between parents and children is encouraged.

At the time the sample were raised, Chinese children were expected to be totally obedient and subservient to their elders. Children had virtually no voice at home. Gradually, influenced by Western culture, the relationships between parents and children have become more informal and relaxed. However, a child's voiced protest to a parent is still not widely accepted in China today. Undoubtedly Chinese Americans have become more permissive as a result of being exposed to Western culture.

The most impressive comparison is between items No. 6 and No. 21, which measure the attitude toward caring for the elderly. Over 75 percent of the responses reflect the common attitude shared by the majority of Americans. Nevertheless, their attitudes toward their own retired parents are uncertain. The inconsistent attitudes suggest the existence of value conflicts between Chinese and American cultures.

Traditionally speaking, the younger generation has been obliged to take care of their parents with no assistance from social security or retirement benefits. It is reasonable for Chinese Americans to believe that they will be independent and self-sufficient when they reach retirement age since they are able to start saving money and paying into social security and pension plans when they are young. They also have to support their own parents who do not have any regular income after retirement and they feel that this is unfair. Yet, their conventional values cause a stressful dilemma. This is why nearly 42 percent of the respondents chose a neutral answer for item 6.

B. Attitude toward interpersonal relations:

Traditional hospitality and close friendship have been part of the Chinese philosophy of life. There is an old saying that "within the four seas (seas bordering China), we are all brothers". People help each other whenever and wherever it is needed. Maintaining a close relationship with one another is still stressed by the selected Chinese-American sample. Yet, they no longer display so much reserve as formerly perceived by other Americans. They now become less tolerant of unpleasant situations. In addition, their former humility has been replaced by self-assertion.

This changed attitude must have been shaped by American environment in which they have lived. They have also become more aggressive dealing with life situations as well as with individuals. They have learned that underestimating oneself will put one down; it is better to brag about oneself than to be humble.

C. Attitude toward sex education:

More than 36 percent of the respondents are unsure regarding parental initiative concerning sex-related subjects. Nearly the same number of parents believe that the parents should take the initiative in sex education. On the other hand, more than half of the sample show concern about the amount of sex-related information provided for their children.

Even though there is a brief unit on sex education in the health and hygiene course for 7th graders in China, the junior-high teachers usually skip it deliberately. At home, parents also try to avoid this subject. Consequently, misconceptions obtained from children's reading materials often mislead them until adulthood. Although most Chinese-American parents do not condemn sex education, nevertheless, they do worry that the contents of sex education may go too far beyond studying human reproductive organs merely from a biological point of view.

D. Attitude toward women:

Based on the three items measuring the sample's attitude toward women, the notion of biological inferiority of women is still shared by the majority of Chinese Americans. On the contrary, the traditional passive role played by Chinese women was denied by most of the respondents. Furthermore, the right for women to work outside the home is supported

overwhelmingly by the sample. This inconsistency may have beer occasioned by the social trends in China. Chinese women have been encouraged to compete with men on an equal basis in every respect since the founding of the Republic in 1911. In a sense, Chinese women were liberated earlier than their counterparts around the world. Career women always carry their maiden name and are addressed as Miss or Ms. in China. There are some seats reserved for female legislators at all legislative levels. Somehow, the competency of women is still questioned by Chinese people. It is a conviction held by the Chinese male that biological differences between male and female affect the levels and functions of not only their bodies but also their mental abilities.

E. Attitude toward social, economic and political issues:

As far as the sample's viewpoints concerning social, economic and political issues are concerned, they are quite conservative. Law enforcement as well as the death penalty is strongly stressed by the majority of Chinese Americans. Evidently, they desire the same stern laws which they experienced in their homeland. Although they have become more permissive about disciplining their children, they firmly object to the exposure of children to pornography.

The merits of using credit cards are carefully examined by the Chinese Americans. Paying cash for merchandise, regardless of the price range is a very popular purchasing behavior. There are two possible reasons contributing to such behavior; 1) habituating conformity with the old-fashioned consumer pattern; and 2) lack of job security. At least, without installments, they do not owe anyone when they face job layoffs unexpectedly.

F. Attitude toward America and American people:

Most of the sample do not excessively admire the American people as was expected by the researcher. Moreover, they are not optimistic about the future of America; 88.3 percent of them indicate that the declining moral standards in America will weaken the strength of the country. The results imply that the myth of white superiority and influence over other races shared by many Asians, is in reality not true. Immigrants' attitude toward America and American people has changed once they settled in this nation. Instead of idolizing America and her people, they now scrutinize American environment more realistically than they did in their native land.

II. Instrument B. How Do I Feel about Living in the United States?

The degree of Chinese Americans' assimilation to American society is explored by measurement in the following four areas.

A. Social isolation:

Although the Chinese Americans do not actively participate in community and civic activities, they are not completely excluded either by their children's schools or their neighbors. At least, most of them show concern about their children's school activities. It can be concluded that Chinese American parents pay more attention to their children's school activities than to other community and civic activities. Their superficial relations with neighbors do not suggest any possibility of doubt concerning assistance in case of emergency. It is believed that most of the selected couples do not live in a transitory neighborhood. With their high income, they may reside in rather nice suburbs.

B. English Proficiency:

Seventy-four percent of the sample express no language problem in speaking English. Yet, the same percentage prefer talking in the

native tongue, if the occasion permits. Since all the sample are well-educated, it is possible that most of them came to the United States with student visas In that case, they had to take several English proficiency examinations prior to admission to the United States. Therefore, some language barrier is not the major problem for communication. However, since they prefer to communicate in their native tongue as much as possible, the research considers this to be a psychological stumbling block which may discourage them from being involved in local civic activities.

C. Adaptation to American lifestyle:

There are five items to measure their accomodation to an American lifestyle. Evidently, they fit the American lifestyle very well. Few of them express any problems finding desirable clothing styles and few show a lack of interest in outdoor sports. This reflection of their preference may not be necessarily geared to cultural influence; possibly it is merely a matter of individual choice.

D. Prospects:

A majority of the sample feel happy and feel confident living in the United States, even though they are not sure whether the United States or China can provide them a better chance of success. This contradictory feeling needs to be investigated.

SUMMARY

Based upon the analysis of the collected data by means of the two attitude inventories, the first-generation Chinese immigrants were found to be complex in their changing value system. They may have a liberal attitude in one area and a conservative opinion in another. Overall, they

can be rated to be more or less conservative, even though their value system has shifted to a great extent through acculturation. In the cognitive domain, they have adjusted to American society quite well, especially in daily living. However, due to the language preference, considered as a psychological stumbling block, they are not socially and psychologically integrated into the mainstream even though they are socially accepted.

Yet several questions concerning the attitudes and adjustment of Chinese Americans still remain unanswered with an increasing number of Chinese immigrants.* Further studies on the correlations between the demographic data and the scores of these two presently used instruments with a larger, heterogeneous sample are recommended.

Since this study has its focus only on first-generation Chinese immigrants, their children's attitude, adjustment and psychological development were not considered. These children having highly-educated immigrant parents are different from those Chinese-American children whose ancestors immigrated to this nation as laborers. Some studies of these two groups of children in the areas of anxiety, aggression, self-identity, racial awareness, value system, ethnic heritage and self-concept need to be encouraged.

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*Last year the Census Bureau predicted that by the year 2000, whites will decline as a proportion of the population from the current 86.6 percent to 84.1 percent while orientals will increase from a share of 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent as a result of continued high immigration (U.S. News and World Report, August 8, 1977)

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WHO ARE THE CHINESE AMERICANS?

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Multicultural Education
Sociopsychological Measurement
Minority -- Chinese Americans

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Who Are the Chinese Americans?

Abstract

Since more than half of the Chinese-American population are foreign-born immigrants, this study has a twofold purpose: 1) to obtain the demographical profile of the first generation Chinese Americans in the Houston metropolitan area; 2) to explore the changing value systems and the environmental adjustment demonstrated by the selected sample.

Nearly 29 percent of the 267 selected Chinese Americans responded to the two attitude inventories designed by the researcher. The reliability and validity of these two inventories measuring the sample's changing value system and adjustment have been established by a pilot study.

The collected data indicate that the mean of the sample's age is 37.2 with 11.5 years of residence in the United States. Surprisingly, the average of their formal education is 19.5 and their average annual household income is $32,400. These are both far above the census figures of 1970.

Based upon the analysis of the data collected by means of the two attitude inventories, the first-generation Chinese immigrants were found to have complex, changing value systems. They may have a liberal attitude in one area but a conservative opinion in another. In general, they can be described as being conservative, although some of their values have been liberalized to a great extent through acculturation. In the cognitive domain, they have adjusted to American society quite well, especially in daily living. However, due to the language preference, considered as a psychological stumbling block, they are not socially and psychologically integrated into the mainstream even though they are socially accepted.

Yet several questions concerning the attitudes and adjustment of Chinese Americans still remain unanswered. With the increasing number of Chinese immigrants,* further studies on the correlations between the demographic data and the scores of the two instruments by applying a larger, heterogeneous sample are recommended.

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*Last year the Census Bureau predicted that by the year 2000, whites will decline as a proportion of the population from the current 86.6 percent to 84.1 percent while orientals will increase from a share of 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent as a result of continued high immigration (U.S. News and World Report, Aug. 8, 1977).